

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 2503

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 8816

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID, PFOR, LE

SUBJECT: VISIT OF LEBANESE PRESIDENTIAL EMISSARY GHASSAN TUEINI

REF: BEIRUT 8815

1. TUEINI CALLED ON ME LATE THIS AFTERNOON, DEC 11. I ADVISED HIM PER MY TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH MAURICE DRAPER (ARN/NEA) THAT IT WOULD BE STRONGLY ADVISABLE THAT HE ARRIVE NEXT WEEK AS IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO ARRANGE APPOINTMENTS THE WEEK AFTER BECAUSE OF THE CHRISTMAS SEASON. HE WAS PLEASED (AS WAS CARLOS KHOURY, CHEF DU CABINET OF THE PRESIDENCY) AND SAID THAT HE TENTATIVELY PLANNED TO LEAVE LEBANON FOR WASHINGTON VIA NEW YORK MONDAY OR TUESDAY, BUT HE WOULD LET ME KNOW HIS DEFINITE TRAVEL PLANS TOMORROW, DEC 12.

2. HE ASKED ME IF HE SHOULD TAKE A NEGOTIATING TEAM WITH HIM. I TOLD HIM THAT THE DEPARTMENT WAS ANXIOUS TO HELP WHERE IT COULD BUT THAT HE SHOULD NOT EXPECT THE DEPARTMENT TO COMMIT ITSELF TO SPECIFIC FORMS OF ASSISTANCE UNTIL IT HAD A CHANCE TO STUDY HIS PROPOSALS. THE OBJECTIVE OF HIS MISSION SHOULD BE TO ADVISE THE DEPARTMENT OF LEBANON'S NEEDS IN ORDER THAT AFTER STUDYING THEM THE USG COULD THEN DETERMINE HOW THE USG COULD BE MOST HELPFUL. HE SHOULD BE AS SPECIFIC AS HE COULD AS TO THE TYPES OF ASSISTANCE LEBANON REQUIRED AND FROM WHAT SOURCES THEY INTENDED TO TAP FOR SUCH ASSISTANCE. I ALSO THOUGHT HE SHOULD HAVE A TIMETABLE AS TO WHEN THE GOL WISHED TO COMPLETE VARIOUS ASPECTS

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OF THEIR RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM. I REITERATED THAT

ANY PUBLIC RELEASE ON HIS MISSION SHOULD AVOID RAISING THE LEBANESE PUBLIC'S EXPECTATION THAT HE WOULD RETURN WITH SPECIFIC ASSISTANCE COMMITMENTS.

3. HE TOLD ME THAT HE WAS THINKING OF TAKING WITH HIM TO WASHINGTON REMY SHAMI, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING; AMBASSADOR HAIDAR, DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY; AND AN ECONOMIST, PERHAPS FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR. HE INDICATED ALL WOULD SPEAK ENGLISH AND AGAIN THAT HE WOULD LET ME KNOW DEFINITELY TOMORROW WHO WOULD BE ACCOMPANYING HIM.

4. HE WONDERED IF IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF HE BRIEFED SOME MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS ON LEBANON'S SITUATION AND, IF SO, WHOM. (HE SUGGESTED SENATOR KENNEDY.) HE WAS ALSO QUITE WILLING TO TALK TO VARIOUS BANKING AND BUSINESS GROUPS. (AS FAR AS CONGRESS WAS CONCERNED, HE MENTIONED THAT HE WOULD, OF COURSE, SEE SENATOR ABU RIZK WHO IS AN OLD FRIEND OF HIS.) I TOLD HIM I WOULD RAISE HIS SUGGESTION WITH THE DEPARTMENT.

5. HE PLANS TO STOP OFF IN NEW YORK ENROUTE AND IS VERY ANXIOUS TO TALK TO BILL BUFFUM ABOUT UN AID. HE SAID HE HAD RECENTLY TALKED WITH BUFFUM IN GENEVA. (COULD SOMEONE IN THE DEPARTMENT ADVISE BUFFUM THAT TUEINI WILL PROBABLY BE IN NEW YORK TUESDAY, DEC 14, AND IS ANXIOUS TO SEE HIM BOTH PERSONALLY AND OFFICIALLY.) HE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO HAVE EXPLORATORY TALKS WITH IBRD AND WOULD BE MOST GRATEFUL IF THE DEPARTMENT COULD MAKE AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE APPROPRIATE OFFICIAL OR OFFICIALS. HE, OF COURSE, IS ALSO ANXIOUS TO TALK WITH APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS IN AID.

6. HE RAISED THE QUESTION OF SEEING THE SECRETARY AND, COMMENTED THAT QUITE APART FROM HIS STRONG DESIRE TO MEET AND TALK WITH THE SECRETARY, IT WOULD BE AWKWARD AS A PRESIDENTIAL EMISSARY IF HE DID NOT SEE HIM.

7. HE ADVISED THAT AMBASSADOR KABBANI IN WASHINGTON WAS INFORMED OF HIS VISIT.

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8. COMMENT: I THINK THE DEPARTMENT CAN PLAN ON TUEINI'S ARRIVING IN WASHINGTON DEC 15 AND ACCOMPANIED BY A GROUP SIMILAR TO THAT DESCRIBED ABOVE. THE GOL ACCORDING TO TUEINI IS UNDER GREAT PRESSURE TO GET RECONSTRUCTION UNDERWAY AND FAST. BY WAY OF EXPLANATION, HE ASKED RHETORICALLY, "DO YOU THINK THAT WE CAN DELAY THE RECONSTRUCTION OF DAMOUR?" THE PORT AND HOUSING WERE TWO AREAS THAT HE EMPHASIZED.

I STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF SPECIFICITY BUT DOUBT IF
THEIR PLANS WILL PERMIT AS MUCH PRECISION AS TO THEIR
REQUIREMENTS AS WE WOULD LIKE. I ALSO FEAR THEY MAY
BE A BIT UNREALISTIC AS TO HOW MUCH AND HOW FAST WE
CAN HELP THEM. HE APPEARED TO ACCEPT AND UNDERSTAND
MY CAUTIONARY STATEMENTS BUT FEAR HIS EXPECTATIONS MAY
STILL BE SOMEWHAT UNREALISTIC. IF THE DEPARTMENT HAS
ANY COMMENTS ON THE ABOVE, PLEASE LET ME KNOW SOONEST
IN ORDER THAT I CAN PASS THEM ON. NEEDLESS TO SAY,
THE TASK WILL BE TO KEEP THE LEBANESE REALISTIC
WITHOUT DISCOURAGING THEM.
HOUGHTON

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